

Washington, DC) -- U.S. Representative Chet Edwards (D-Waco), Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, today applauded the announcement by the Department of Veterans Affairs of \$37.2 million to construct a "polytrauma center" in San Antonio for the nation's most severely injured Veterans. Currently, there are only four polytrauma centers in Florida, Minnesota, California and Virginia, which forces Texas troops and their families to travel long distances for vital care.

**Congressman Edwards said**, "As Chairman, it has been an honor to work closely with the VA to bring this polytrauma center to San Antonio. It will serve soldiers across Texas, including those in my Central Texas district and nearby Fort Hood, who will now be able to stay closer to home while receiving the life-saving health care they need. San Antonio is a great location for the center because of the outstanding quality care America's service men and women receive at Brooke Army Medical Center and Audie Murphy VA Medical Center."

**Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said**, "Since becoming Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman Edwards has authorized legislation that has increased VA health care and benefits by 60 percent. This funding has resulted in a total increase of 8,300 claims processors, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, 70 Vet Centers, and more than 47,000 additional Veterans Health Administration employees."

**Background:** The VA decision to locate the center in San Antonio is a direct result of a meeting in 2007 between Chairman Edwards and VA officials where Edwards asked what was needed to improve care for severely wounded troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The VA identified a need for a fifth Level 1 Polytrauma center. Following that meeting, Chairman Edwards authored the provisions in the 2007 Supplemental Appropriations bill that established

the polytrauma center with a \$30 million appropriation. Polytrauma is injury to both the brain and other organs that results in disability requiring extensive care.

*Edwards represents District 17 and co-chairs the House Army Caucus.*

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